

**Remarks of Indiana Lt. Governor Becky Skillman
at the Logansport Juvenile Correctional Facility's GED Graduation Ceremony
October 19, 2011**

Lori thanks for the kind words, and great leadership and service to our state. It's an honor to be with you today and help mark a major milestone for the students.

Although we're here to celebrate their success, we all know that we can only accomplish great things with the support of others. So, I'd like to begin by acknowledging the others in the audience today – the parents, grandparents, families and friends of the graduates as well as the instructors, support staff, and administration.

On behalf of the students, I'd like to offer a big "thank you" for all your help in making this day possible. I know the students will be happy to join me in a round of applause for all you've done.

As we celebrate today, I know that you're already aiming higher for the future. Spending time in a juvenile correction facility isn't exactly on the list of things most young people hope to do in their lives. There have been, possibly, bad decisions in the past – decisions that brought some hard consequences.

But you've clearly chosen not to allow a bumpy start to derail you. You've used your time here wisely, and taken opportunities to build something for yourself. And when you leave here you'll be able to move forward, full steam ahead into a brighter future.

Perhaps you're going to pursue a college degree or sharpen your skills in a vocational school, or learn a trade and get right to work.

Whatever your goals, I hope you'll pursue them with everything you have. Indiana needs all of its people to work hard and realize their dreams. Every accomplishment you make as an individual is a building block for your family and your community.

Every GED earned today is another step up, another positive action that will encourage others. It's a step that will allow you to continue down a path that will hopefully lead to a happy, full life for you and your families.

You've aimed higher and have achieved something special that others in your circumstances have not. I congratulate you on a job well done – thank you for learning from your mistakes – and I charge you to keep moving forward.

Hoosiers are famous for great underdog stories. Whether it's a high school basketball team or a rags-to-riches businessman, we love to see people overcome obstacles and live well.

You have a long legacy of Hoosier success stories to stand on and build your lives. One of the best of those stories is about the son of an illiterate farmer. He was a lackluster soldier, a losing politician, and a failed businessman with a mountain of debt. He ran for Congress – failed. Ran for Vice-President – failed. Ran for U.S. Senate – failed.

Yet, Abraham Lincoln ultimately became one of the most famous presidents our nation has ever known. He successfully led us through one of the darkest periods of American history. He was in the right place at the right time, because he persevered. He constantly aimed higher, and proved that a life of achievement is the product of endurance and hard work.

You've already overcome significant trials. It may not seem that way right now but your achievements are, in fact, a form of leadership. You're leading by example, by inspiration.

One of my favorite quotes comes from John Quincy Adams. He wrote, "If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, and become more, you are a leader." His lesson to all of us is that leadership can come from anywhere.

You don't have to be a CEO or a Governor to be a leader. You can lead by choosing to live well, supporting those around you and enabling them to dream more, learn more, and become more.

So be proud of your accomplishments and share your story. Offer a helping hand to someone who might be making the same mistakes you made and help them stay on the right path.

As you prepare to leave this safe-haven and step back into your lives, you will have a thousand choices to make. Each choice is an opportunity. Every decision is important, no matter how insignificant it may appear. In the end, the story of your life will be the sum total of those decisions. You can build something lasting with each decision. It's up to you.

Throughout history, for most people, life has been short and hard. People around the world envy our comfort and freedom. Use your freedom to challenge yourself and choose to do what it takes to succeed.

This is an important moment of transition in your life. This is a time to stop and think a moment to savor your success. It's a time to acknowledge – yes, there've been bumps along

the road but you made progress anyway. And you're ready to close the hard chapter and move on to a new, fresh chapter.

As you go out to conquer the world be sure to take a moment to thank those who helped you.

Don't underestimate what you've achieved and what is yet to come. You got here today by pushing yourself past old boundaries. Don't stop learning. Grasp the opportunities with both hands, and remember that you have already chosen to aim higher.

You can achieve great things for yourselves, your families, your communities and our state.

I wish you the very best. We're proud of you. You have my hearty congratulations!